Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Washington

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
MAR 25 1925
U. S. Department of Agriculture

May 5, 1925.

F.S.
A-17

FOREIGN NEWS ON APPLES

THE DISTRIBUTION OF APPLES THROUGH CARDIFF

Cardiff, a city of 230,000 people, is the most important shipping and distributing point of South Wales, sharing this business with Swansea and Newport. It is the greatest coal shipping port in the world and its prosperity, like the cities and towns that it serves, depends upon the state of the coal industry. During the current year the coal industry of Wales has been very badly depressed, and this has had an unfavorable effect on other forms of business.

The principal fruit imports into Cardiff consist of Mediterranean citrus fruits. The port ranks considerably below Bristol in volume of oranges and lemons handled, but owing to the fact that it serves an industrial population of 4,000,000 to 5,000,000, in the mining areas, it is considered a better apple market than the latter city, which serves more of an agricultural region that produces apples.

Facilities for Handling American Apples.

Cardiff's dock and harbor facilities are owned and operated by the Great Western Railway, and because of the tremendous volumes dealt with the best of facilities have been provided, including sheds, hydraulic and electric cranes, electric warehouse trucks, cold storage and trackage. The sheds devoted to handling fruit are roomy, light and admirably adapted to the purpose.

Shipping facilities between New York and Cardiff are the same as for Bristol, - bi-weekly sailings of the Bristol City Line, and the Oriole Line, operating ships for the U. S. Shipping Board. The service is deficient in proper space for handling early apples or fruit that has not the best of carrying qualities.

Auction Methods and Fruit Brokers.

Methods of selling in Cardiff are below the average for Great Britain. Sales are made at auction, but the best apple brokerage houses are divided into two groups, whereas the volume of fruit is scarcely large enough to justify one good auction room. In order to gain the goodwill of the buyers there is a tendency to sacrifice the growers' interests when such an auction competition is set up. This situation also splits up the group of buyers and weakens the buying competition fundamental to auction sales. It is interesting to note that before shippers of Jaffa oranges would consent to discharge a ship in Cardiff they required the brokers to get together and sell the cargo in one sales room. The buyers have a strong organization and limit its membership to bona fide wholesale dealers. The names of Cardiff brokers may be had upon application to the Foreign Section, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Washington, D.C.

Samples are selected at the dock and hauled to the city, about 1½ miles distant, and displayed outside the sales rooms. No set rules obtain on samples but usually one sample is taken for about 50 packages. The brokers have a couple of men each at the docks to attend to the sorting, but all handling is done by the dock men, very strict Union regulations preventing the brokers from doing the dockers' work. One group of brokers classifies barreled apples as "Tight", "Slack" and "Wet", while the other sorts as "Tight", "Slightly Slack", "Slack" and "Wet".

Sales Room facilities are somewhat limited and consist of little more than benches for the accommodation of about 100 buyers. Tuesday is Cardiff's principal auction day, although, if a cargo is not discharged on time or if the condition of the fruit prevents holding over, special auctions are called on other days.

Cold Storage Facilities.

The Great Western Railway has provided a good cold storage plant at its Queen Alexandra Dock, situated about three ship-lengths from the shed used for fruit handling. The storage was primarily constructed for meat with direct expansion, but if properly handled would be entirely suitable for fruit. Its capacity is 300,000 cu. ft. and is divided into moderate sized rooms. It is said that any desired temperature would be maintained.

It is apparent that at points like Cardiff and Bristol practically no experience has been had with the refrigeration of fruits. If cold storage were to be used at these points, therefore, not only would it be necessary to give initial operations close supervision as to handling and piling, but it would also be important to store quantities large enough to justify the employing of a special watchman to check up temperatures. These remarks are prompted by the observations of freezers and coolers adjacent to each other in the same building. The uninitiated are almost certain to freeze fruit, or carry it at too high temperatures, when such conditions exist.

Demand and Competition.

While Cardiff is taking from 8,000 to 13,000 cases of oranges per week its capacity for apples is not so great. It has taken as high as 7,000 barrels in one week, but from 3,000 to 6,000 is nearer it regular figure. It is a market that wants colored apples and takes larger quantities of barreled than of boxed stocks. The mining population that it serves wants an attractive apple at a moderate price.

The York Imperial of the Virginia region exactly suits the market as long as it arrives in good condition. At present the trade is supplied largely by consignments of Virginia and Nova Scotia apples, the latter offering the greatest competition to American apples and arriving in greater volume. Only limited supplies of boxes apples can be taken and those preferred are the red varieties of sizes 175 to 200. These are slightly smaller than those most desired in Liverpool, Manchester and the north.

Oranges and Grapefruit.

Little opportunity is seen for American citrus fruit in Cardiff. The cheaper oranges from the Mediterranean countries shut out our fruit. While the city of Cardiff has a populace that are far above that class ordinarily associated with coal miners, still the commercial people that would buy grapefruit would not make much of an outlet, even if they were acquainted with the fruit, which they are not at the present time. Supplies of grapefruit are either purchased in London or Liverpool in wholesale lots of twenty or thirty cases at a time.

Costs of Selling.

The brokers charge a 3 per cent basic commission, together with an inclusive handling charge of 36¢ (1/6) per barrel and 18¢ (9d) per box on apples. These charges are somewhat lower than the 38¢ on barrels and 28¢ on boxes as quoted by Vice Consul Christiani in the report on "The Cardiff Apple Market" (A-8), released February 28, 1925.

Conclusions and Remarks.

The same remarks about "dishonest" packing of certain American barrels are heard in Cardiff, as in other markets. This is particularly unfortunate since fundamentally this is not a boxed apple market. While increasing quantities of boxes may be taken in the future, much depends on the prosperity of the coal industry.

The above remarks relative to an unsatisfactory auction situation should not stop shippers from using this market in a modest manner. It is not essentially a "pocket market" since in some instances samples are forwarded to Bristol and sales made at the Bristol auction with delivery from the Cardiff quay.

EDWIN SMITH
Specialist in Foreign Marketing.